



The Society of Apothecaries of London

Guide to The Diploma in the Medical Care of Catastrophes (DMCC) Incorporating the Regulations and Syllabus

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Future Amendments to the Regulations and Syllabus

The DMCC will continue to change to reflect developments in disaster relief and catastrophe medicine. Although every attempt has been made to ensure that this version of the DMCC Examination Regulations and Syllabus is current, changes to the DMCC examination, the Regulations and closing dates may need to be implemented. Candidates should refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#) for the most up-to-date information.

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Introduction

The Diploma in the Medical Care of Catastrophes was originally instituted by the Society of Apothecaries of London in 1993. It was for doctors who provided the medical, public health and surgical response at the scene of major man-made and natural disasters and in conflict and post-conflict situations. They could demonstrate their expertise through the examination of their specialist knowledge in advance of its being needed. The candidate base has since been broadened to include nurses and dentists.

The primary aim of the Diploma is to prepare personnel to deploy on humanitarian operations in difficult conditions as independent practitioners. The preparation requires candidates to complete a course by undertaking a number of modules which are designed to cover the whole range of situations which might be encountered, and which reflect the diverse skills needed for an effective and humanitarian health response.

The secondary aim is to teach, within the wider context of the situation, an appreciation of the agencies and actors involved in the organisation of relief responses, codes of conduct, the minimum standards of relief and how to evaluate relief programmes.

Each candidate is expected to show a grasp of these principles through knowledge of the six modules of the syllabus. Module completion may include attendance on an appropriate course, or module of a course, occupational practice or deployed field experience.

Associated Course

The Society's Faculty of Conflict and Catastrophe Medicine runs a one-year course, successful completion of which counts as an entry qualification to the Diploma examination, providing that the candidate fulfils the other entry requirements (see relevant paragraphs). Further details may be obtained from the Faculty's pages on the Society's [website](#).

Candidates undergoing courses of an equivalent standard may apply to the Head of the Academic Department for recognition of such courses or training. For example, an MSc in Disaster Medicine or equivalent will satisfy most of the modules.

Candidates with a great deal of experience in the subject may be able to use that experience retrospectively to gain exemption from modules at the discretion of the Academic Quality & Standards Committee (AQSC).

A one-year extension may be purchased should extenuating circumstances arise. This will be on an individual basis and will apply once approval has been sought from the Convenor and Course Director.

Date and Place of Examinations

Please refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#).

Regulations for Admission to the Diploma in the Medical Care of Catastrophes (DMCC) Examination

1. Candidates must have possessed for one year either:
 - a. A qualification to practise Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics & Gynaecology and be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) of the United Kingdom; **OR**
 - b. A qualification to practise Dental Surgery and be registered with the General Dental Council (GDC) of the United Kingdom; **OR**
 - c. A qualification to practise Nursing and be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) of the United Kingdom; **OR**

- d. A medical, dental or nursing qualification awarded by an internationally recognised institution. (Thus, a medical degree awarded outside the UK must be on the World Health Organisation's World Directory of Medical Schools.)

Note: Medical, dental or nursing graduates who have qualified outside the UK who are not registered with the GMC, GDC or the NMC in the UK, but who are registered with an equivalent national medical/dental/nursing council, may be admitted to the examination with the approval of the (AQSC) if they have complied with all the other requirements of the Regulations. Candidates who are not registered with the GMC, GDC or NMC must submit the following with their application form:

- Documentary evidence of their primary medical qualification (authenticated copy only); and
- Evidence of current registration in their own jurisdiction

- e. Allied health care professionals that have completed the course (e.g. Paramedics, Pharmacists) may sit the examination, on an individual basis at the discretion and approval of the Convenor.

2. Candidates must have either:

- i. Completed the one-year course run by the Society's Faculty of Conflict and Catastrophe Medicine; **OR**

Completed a course or courses of an equivalent standard – an MSc in Disaster Medicine or equivalent will satisfy most of the modules (see syllabus section for details). Candidates with a great deal of experience in the subject may be able to use that experience retrospectively to gain exemption from modules at the discretion of the AQSC

Note: Candidates who do not meet Condition 2ii must register and pay for the Society's Faculty of Conflict and Catastrophe Medicine Course in order to be eligible for entry to the DMCC Examination.

3. Entry to the examination must be made within 3 years of completing the Faculty's course.
4. Form A (for those applying for the first time) and the fee must be received by the closing date published in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates.
5. Re-entry to the examination must also be made within 3 years of completing the Faculty's course.
6. Form R (re-entrants) and the fee must be received by the closing date published in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates.
7. If applicable, Form Q (Application for Special Examination Arrangements) must be received no later than 4 weeks before the application deadline for the examination, published in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates.

The Examination

8. The examination is conducted in English. Candidates must have demonstrable skills in listening, reading, writing and speaking in English that enable effective communication in clinical practice with patients and colleagues, as set out in Domain 3 of the GMC's *Good Medical Practice (2013)*. Precision in communication and legibility of handwriting is therefore essential.

9. The aim of the combination of the written paper and the OSCPHE is to determine whether the candidate has the knowledge and skills to practise effective healthcare in a difficult disaster or conflict situation, both at home and overseas.
10. The examination has two elements, the written paper and the OSCPHE. Both the written paper and the OSCPHE must be passed to complete the examination.
11. Both the written paper and the OSCPHE should be taken at the initial sitting. A pass in one element may be taken forward; the failed element will need to be re-taken, and a re-sit fee paid. The whole examination must be completed within 3 years.
12. The examination fee will be determined from time to time by the AQSC and published in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates. Candidates who withdraw from the examination after the closing date will pay the forfeit fee specified in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates.
13. This diploma is not re-certifiable. Evidence of updating is necessary within the clinician's regular appraisal or professional revalidation processes.
14. On the days of the examination candidates are forbidden to bring books, papers, calculators, mobile telephones or any other electronic devices into the examination rooms.
15. It is strictly forbidden for candidates to attempt to communicate with each other in any way while an examination is in progress.
16. Candidates must bring photographic evidence of their identity.
17. The AQSC reserves the right to refuse to admit to the examination, or to proceed with the examination, of any candidate who infringes a regulation or who refuses to comply with a reasonable request of an officer of the Society.

The Written Paper

18. The written paper will last 2 hours and comprise of short-answer questions to test core knowledge. Each question is normally sub-divided into a number of parts each requiring a short phrase, a single sentence or a brief explanation.
19. **Late arrivals for the written paper.** Candidates who present themselves for the written paper examination after the start time stated in the admission document will be admitted if they arrive within 30 minutes of this time, but may not be admitted if they arrive thereafter. Candidates will forfeit the time lost. In exceptional circumstances, where all candidates are affected by delays, the examination timings may be amended.
20. Candidates' completed examination scripts become the property of, and will be retained by, the Society. They will not be made available for study.

The OSCPHE

21. Late arrivals for the OSCPHE will not be admitted.
22. The OSCPHE tests the analytical ability and the reasoning and decision making skills of candidates when placed in complex scenarios arising from the core knowledge. The stations are selected from a blueprint to ensure that an appropriate distribution of skills is tested. Candidates must be able to demonstrate a range of capabilities in the active stations comprising the exercise.
23. The details of the OSCPHE procedure will be provided to candidates at the time of their application as the arrangements may vary. Instruction will be provided to candidates about the detailed conduct of each OSCPHE examination at the time it is held.
24. A circuit consists of 8 stations. The duration of each element may vary but is usually 3 minutes reading time and 8 minutes of discussion with an examiner.
25. No patients or actors are used in the OSCPHE examination.

Review and Appeal Procedure

26. The processes outlined below will be dealt with according to the Examination Review and Appeal Procedure. In no circumstances should a candidate make representations directly to an examiner.
27. The stages of the review and appeal procedures are as follows:
 - a. Feedback – first, compulsory stage;
 - b. Review – second, optional stage;
 - c. Appeal – third, optional stage.
28. **Feedback.** The feedback process operates through the Head of the Academic Department/Head of the Academic Department. Feedback on examination performance will be provided automatically to all candidates.
29. Feedback should be read in conjunction with the explanation of the marking scheme and the standard that is required to achieve a pass in the examination contained in this Guide.
30. The Head of the Academic Department can also relay a transcript of additional general advice directly to the candidate, if such advice is available. This is advice generated by the Examination Panel, which had been agreed at the time of the examination. The Head of the Academic Department's role is to distribute the prepared information but not to interpret it.
31. There is no charge to the candidate for this service.
32. **Review (optional).** A request by a candidate for a review of a paper must be received in writing within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the result and feedback. There is a fee of £175 for a review.

33. **Appeal (optional).** An appeal to the Society’s Academic Quality and Standards Committee is open to a candidate who is not satisfied with the decision of the Examination Panel, feedback or the Review Panel. In accordance with the Society’s Examination Review and Appeal Procedure, the detailed grounds on which the appeal is made must be stated. The appeal must be received in writing within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the examination result or the review. It is not necessary to seek a review before appealing. There is a fee of £250 for an appeal.
34. If the appellant is dissatisfied with the report of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and wishes to make an appeal to the Court of Assistants, this should be communicated to the Head of the Academic Department within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the decision of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

The Syllabus

35. The syllabus is summarised in the table below. Full details are available on the [website](#).

Module 1	The Wider Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key national and international stakeholders - Legal framework; Ethics of humanitarian action - The history of, and current trends in, humanitarian aid - Closing the gap between humanitarian assistance and development aid - Factors affecting humanitarian aid and its effectiveness - Medical and health related funding and types of donations - Health systems
Module 2	Practical epidemiology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Epidemiology of disasters - Health status and setting priorities - Vulnerable groups - Reporting and surveillance systems, and record keeping - Monitoring and evaluation
Module 3	Health services and interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention, control and treatment of communicable diseases - Immunisation - Prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases - Mental health - Sexual and gender-based violence - Maternal and child health - Nutrition and food security - Management of pain - Emergency care - Medical care in extreme hot and cold environments - Water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management - Mass gatherings and casualties - Hazardous chemicals, biological warfare agents, nuclear radiation etc. (CBRN)

Marking System

The Written Paper

36. The DMCC Examination Panel assesses the difficulty of the questions set against the level of knowledge expected of candidates.

37. All judgements by the Panel are then analysed and a criterion-referenced pass mark is established for each question which is the standard.
38. The SAQ will then be marked against previously agreed answers which have been standard set against that standard.
39. The overall pass mark for the examination (i.e. the examination written paper standard) will depend on the total answer judged by the examiners to be the minimum level requirement for candidates.

NB. As a result of the standard setting, the pass mark and pass rate can vary from one examination to the next, although the standard will remain the same.

40. The Examination may include pre-and post-test questions (trial questions that are used for research purposes only). A small number of pre-test questions may appear in any paper. Responses to them do not count towards a candidate's final score.

The OSCPHE

41. The standard required on each station is criterion-referenced by the Examination Panel in the same manner as the components of the written paper.
42. The Panel then determines the overall standard to pass the OSCPHE by reference to a global score using a standard procedure.
43. The minimum requirement to pass is:
 - a. Achieving the minimum total marks to achieve the criterion-referenced standard; and
 - b. Failing no more than 3 OSCPHE stations, as decided by the Examination Panel for that examination.

Examination Performance Feedback

44. Candidates will be informed whether they passed or failed each question in the written paper.
45. Feedback for the OSCPHE will comprise a pass / fail result for each station.